

Reflections from WT with Terry and Dyke Rogers

- Randy Ray: Welcome to episode number 37 of Reflections from WT, the Heart and Soul of the Texas Panhandle. My name is Randy Ray. I'm the director broadcast engineering here on the campus, And I'm joined as always by Dr. Walter Wendler.
- President Wendler: Your co-host.
- Randy Ray: Your co-host and boss and lot of [crosstalk 00:00:30].
- President Wendler: And friend. Glad to be here, Randy.
- Randy Ray: Before we introduce our guest Dr. Wendler, there's been a lot of announcements lately about the One West campaign. Tell everyone what the One West campaign is and talk about some of these announcements that we've had.
- President Wendler: Sure. The overview, the One West campaign is an effort on the part of WT to raise \$125 million in funding, mostly to support people and I'm sure we'll talk about that as we go along and we kicked it off six months ago with \$80 million in the bank, we're looking to raise 125 and we just crossed a 100 million, we're actually at 107 million this past week. So, we're really-
- Randy Ray: That's a big deal.
- President Wendler: I think we're making tremendous progress. There's great energy in it. You can feel it when you get people in the room and there's so many people that really like WT and appreciate it and want to help us and it's very gratifying.
- Randy Ray: How important is fundraising these days to a university?
- President Wendler: Well, more important than ever because the fact of the matter is and this is not a lament, this is just the truth of it is that state funding has been decreasing in recent years and the expectation is that we supplement that. This isn't stated anywhere, but this is the goal I said for myself to supplement changes in state appropriations through gifts and grants and other kinds of I'm going to call it entrepreneurial activity. And that's part of West Texas. It's part of the spirit of the place. And I really do believe that we've embraced that wholeheartedly and it's and to your point, how important it is, it's exceedingly important. We cannot survive on state [inaudible 00:02:13].
- Randy Ray: We can't survive without it.
- President Wendler: Can't survive.

Randy Ray: And that leads us to our guest today. I'm really excited about introducing Terry and Dyke Rogers who have been very instrumental in the One West campaign in a lot of different ways, so thank you guys for being here. Dyke I'm going to ask you first and first of all, I'm going to ask you about your name. I have never met another Dyke. Is that a family name? Where did that come from?

Dyke Rogers: Actually, I got named after a radio broadcaster named Dyke Cameron.

Randy Ray: Well, you're in the right place then.

President Wendler: I didn't know that. I find out something new every day.

President Wendler: If you learn and you listening, you going to learn a little bit, interesting.

Randy Ray: So, both you guys are both alums from WT. I can understand your story, pretty interesting. You were on your way to the beach when you discovered WT, right?

Dyke Rogers: I was, I left home in Fort Worth and knew that college wasn't in my future and I was just headed to the beach and I'd really never been out of the state. And I took an old car and I had 100 bucks and I thought I had the world by the tail and I was headed out and my car broke down in Amarillo and-

Randy Ray: That's an old country song I think isn't it. [crosstalk 00:03:20].

President Wendler: It sounds like that.

Dyke Rogers: It would make one and it'd make a great story, except it's true.

Randy Ray: So, how did you get connected with West Texas State University at that time?

Dyke Rogers: Well, I had a cousin that I went to work for. He was here and we were going to roof houses and he was in the construction business and it was summer and [crosstalk 00:03:43]. I knew that wasn't what I wanted to do for long. And so I got enough money to leave and he said, "Well, you really need to be going to school" and I said, "I can't go to school, I don't have any money". And he said, "Well, we can arrange that". He said, let's go down to WT and he introduced me to the guys at the opportunity plan, Clifford Baker and Buff Morris and they gave me the once over and then said, well, how did you do on your ACT? And I said, I didn't take it.

Dyke Rogers: And they said, why not? And I said, well, I wasn't planning on going to school. And he said, well, it so happens we're going to give it here in a few days and so you take it and I did and think did fairly well on it. And so they lined me up with some scholarship and some Pell Grant and a little loan and I started school and I went home for Christmas and my mom said, well, how was the beach? And-

Randy Ray: There's no beach in Canyon, Texas.

Dyke Rogers: So, mom I just didn't quite make it.

Randy Ray: That's funny. Let me ask, think back to those early days at West Texas State and what was the first thing you fell in love with at WT?

Dyke Rogers: It just felt like home. The people that I was around were the kind of people I wanted to be around. The activities that we had most of were activities I really wanted to do and you just had a freedom to do the things that you wanted to do. And if you wanted to participate you could, if you didn't want to participate, you didn't have to and I just found a good group of friends and it was a great experience.

Randy Ray: Terry, let me ask you something. So, you're also a graduate from West Texas, but you got your graduate degree from West Texas.

Terry Rogers: Yes.

Randy Ray: What did you fall in love with your WT?

Terry Rogers: My professor, Dr. Robert Splon. I was getting my Masters in Education Administration and he was just a great guy. He looked at you and he expected a lot out of you, had dry sense of humor and I wasn't active on campus because I had two young kids at home. So, WT was a lifeline for me and my family.

President Wendler: You know Randy, Terry's story is an interesting one and I think more and more we're going to see what we call nontraditional students. I usually use the example of single moms or working dads that have by layoff or some lost a job and need to re-skill or find a skillset that has more value in the marketplace. And we're going to see our average age at WT is creeping up its over 25 now. And that was never the case in the past. And I think we're going to see more and more of that. And people like you have helped us get ready for that because you do have to engage differently with parents, single parents, even students that may be just single people that are in their 30s coming out of the workforce and wanting to get an education. So, I think we're going to see more and more of that.

Randy Ray: Yeah, I think so too. So, you got your Master's Degree in Education. And recently, it was announced that the college of education was going to be renamed in your honor. How does that feel that the school you went to will have your name on it? That's got to be pretty amazing.

Terry Rogers: I'm still trying to wrap my brain around it, but I'm so excited because I represent all educators from the pre-K teacher to the professors here. And we all know that most educators cannot give the funds that my wonderful husband did in my honor. So, really we just want to celebrate educators and just celebrate teachers and that's what that name means to me.

Randy Ray: So, Dyke gave you this as a gift and it was a Christmas gift. So, tell us about how that came about.

Dyke Rogers: Well, I decided back in about October that I really wanted to do something significant for WT and I wanted to honor my wife at the same time. And so I talked to Dr. Wendler and Dr. Rasberry and we thought this would be an appropriate thing, but I really was afraid to tell her because I knew what she would say, she'd say oh, bull we're not doing that. And so I really get a call every week. Have you talked to her yet? Well, no, I really haven't. And so Christmas, I thought if we do this in front of some of our kids, she's going to not be able to say no. And so we actually videoed it and she had never seen the video when we made the presentation here at WT. So, it was a unique moment.

President Wendler: Very special.

Randy Ray: So, what did you have to do with that? How, were you in on that?

President Wendler: Well, I just need to keep my lip buttoned up until he figured out engineered the way he was going to talk to Terry about all this and Dyke and Todd Rasberry, Vice President Rasberry and I had a number of conversations about it. And of course we were thrilled. You know there's only three colleges of education in the great State of Texas that are named because of a gift, just three and they are Publix and of those three, ours has the largest gift associated with the naming. So, we're number one in that very narrow sliver of space, but that sliver of space is really important to us because the college of education is the flagship at WT.

President Wendler: They started as a normal school. People came here for a two year certificate so they could teach public school. That was the genesis of West Texas A&M University that we now know today and it's broadened out and covers so many other things, but one thing that's never changed the day it opened in 1910, it was committed to serving the Panhandle first and today in 2022, it's still committed to serving the Panhandle first and I really do believe that-

Randy Ray: What is the percentage of teachers that come from here? I've heard that well.

President Wendler: In the top 26 counties, 75% of the teachers have one degree or one certificate because teachers get different kinds of certificates for different aspects of managing and leading school districts. 75% of the people that work in public schools, primary and secondary schools have at least one degree or certificate from WT. Now, what I tell people and I mean it, we have to take that very seriously, if primary and secondary education in Panhandle is doing a good job, we can let our chest fill out a little bit with pride because we've helped engineer that. On the other hand, if things aren't working well, if our high school graduates in the Panhandle are not performing very well, we better bend over with a weight of that on our shoulders. We need to feel that weight because we're not doing, we can't blame it on some other institution.

Randy Ray: That's very true.

President Wendler: Somebody else it's us, we own it. And I like the fact that we own it and I like the fact that people in West Texas like to own things, they want responsibilities. That's not the case everywhere I've lived.

Terry Rogers: I can brag on WT because I was a principal in Amarillo in the 90s and most of my teachers were WT graduates and they were outstanding. They were such great teachers and professional people and I just can't thank them enough, they work so hard. And then recently, I have been working in an administrative role in Dalhart Elementary. And again, most of our teachers graduated from WT and they are the cream of the crop. So, I do think we can always improve on different things, but WT is doing a great job educating the educators.

Randy Ray: So, what grades did you teach?

Terry Rogers: I taught kindergarten and first grade.

Randy Ray: Well, you're tougher than I am, I guarantee that.

Terry Rogers: Delightful.

Randy Ray: So, how is teaching and administrating? How is that similar and how is that different when it comes to education?

Terry Rogers: Well, what I'm seeing going back after being retired for about 20 years, is technology is really important and then we have a lot of language barriers and cultural barriers. So, the bilingual programs are very important. And just support of teachers, community support, parent support, that's always been the case especially after COVID, we all became very isolated and now I think we need to get back in there and get involved and support the educators in our communities.

Randy Ray: Well, that speaks directly to what we're doing here on campus.

President Wendler: I think so and I would just in a sense to reinforce or amplify what Terry has said, public educators take a lot on the chin nowadays for some reason and like any profession, there's people that make a great contribution and some probably thankfully a small number would be better served I don't know, maybe roofing houses, doing something else, but that's a small percentage. By and large, I think they do a great job, but they have to take it on the chin a lot and they're exposed and you hear about the one off cases where some untoward thing goes on or the people aren't doing their jobs, but by and large, at least the public school teachers that I know, and I've bumped into them as I've toured these Panhandle schools twice, I've bumped into them and I have to say, I respect very much what I see there.

President Wendler: They're people that are committed, their heart is in it, their head is in it, they're committed to the communities. It's powerful and I think that's what makes this gift and not just the gift, but Terry and Dyke and their support of WT so important it's because they know the region, they're committed to the region and that's what we need.

Randy Ray: And it wasn't just this recent gift, they help get Rogers LEAD going. So, Dyke talk about what Rogers LEAD is to people that don't know.

Dyke Rogers: Well, it started about nine years ago and it's 25 juniors, 25 seniors and they teach leadership philosophy. Mostly, I would say servant leadership. They have activities, they have to do internships, they work with nonprofits, they put on a leadership summit for the university. They really learn how to operate in a complex society in a way that's productive and produces results. And we watch kids go in and I say kids as juniors and some of them look like deer in the headlights and when they come out, they are really accomplished young people. And some of that is just an age of maturity, just an extra year, but I just believe some of it is the inspiration and the leadership that they're taught in the class that they're in. And it's not a program, particularly for the class presidents in high school, it's people that are recognized as having more potential than what they've exhibited. And it's an attempt to bring that potential to something that's very positive for them. And we've watched that over and over with different students that have come through the program.

President Wendler: Randy, I'd like to ask Dyke and Terry the leadership of Rogers LEAD WT, Missy and Rick are really special people that are committed to these young men and women who are in this program. Then I think it's a remarkable program. When I went up to speak to the students at Dalhart, they had some kind of a meeting up there in Dalhart and the whole Rogers LEAD came up there and sat together. And it was interesting to watch them, it's just interesting. They appreciate the value of belonging to something larger than themselves and being committed and hard work and being sincere and honest and truthful and those kinds of things. And we don't have the market cornered on those things, but when you see it over and over again in a program like Rogers LEAD WT, we should be getting students here at WT because of that program who will look forward to hoping that they might become part of it and it affects by the way, not just those 50 young people that are involved with it, the juniors and seniors, but it affects all campus. It creates a standard.

Dyke Rogers: Well, one of the things that's kind of tough in that program is that you have a lot more applicants than what can be accepted and they're very acceptable applicants, so you have to tell an awful lot of people no, but the people who get in it, I had lunch today with one of the LEAD students and just ask him what's this done for you? And I didn't expect a pat on the back, I just expected a good answer. And he said, "It made a notable change in his life". And that's important and Rick and Missy do such a good job. When I left this school, I didn't cry for any of my professors, I didn't have any of them come and hugged me, I didn't

have any of that. We attend... We're able to be with these students several times a year and one of those times is a graduation.

Dyke Rogers: And it is just really rewarding to watch these young people who are so moved by the people who led them, that they're hugging and crying and it's a family arrangement. We've got one of our students that just came down with a virus illness that's had to withdraw presently to do that, she's presently in the hospital and the outpouring from the students has just been remarkable. The prayer, the support, the gifts, that sort of thing. It's a family arrangement that's really neat.

Randy Ray: Well, I have said it before to my students and I've said it to people that know I work here. I believe this is a life changing place, but students have got to let it change them. And I think everyone in this room, it has changed our life in a way this place has and I want to say on behalf of someone that works at WT, someone that loves WT, thank you too for all that you have done for our institution, we couldn't do it without you and because of people like you, we can continue to be in a life changing place, so thank you.

Dyke Rogers: You're welcome. We want it to stay that way and it's actually been very life changing for us. We were not really involved in WT after graduation until about 15 years ago. And just the association of being on this campus with these young people, it is invigorating, it's inspiring and what I know is that the whole world isn't going to hell in hand basket, it is actually, there's a lot of hope out here from these students that are progressing.

President Wendler: I agree. I couldn't say anymore [crosstalk 00:18:35].

Randy Ray: Is everybody ready? Every episode I throw a curve ball. And so I'm going to throw you a curve ball this time and we were having a conversation before we started the podcast about bucket list. So, I want everyone to tell me what's next on your bucket list?

President Wendler: Start on that side.

Terry Rogers: I have the privilege. I just met with Dr. Henderson and some of his wonderful faculty and I'm just going to be very active and just learning more about the college of education and social sciences and so excited that-

Randy Ray: Is there something outside of WT? Like a [crosstalk 00:19:14].

Terry Rogers: Another thing. Listen, this has been a lifeline again to get back in the classroom and then to just listen to the professors and their dreams and so right now that's my bucket list. We are traveling some after COVID this summer so that's on bucket list with our two granddaughters.

Randy Ray: As you guys are traveling, maybe Dyke can finally make it out to the beach.

Terry Rogers: Maybe so.

Randy Ray: Several years in the making.

President Wendler: You know what I had to ask him? I said, well, if you were in Fort Worth, how in the world were you getting to the beach heading to Amarillo? I think that was the first mistake he made.

Randy Ray: Took a wrong turn somewhere.

Dyke Rogers: I took a wrong turn but he-

Randy Ray: I thought California was where the beaches were.

President Wendler: Well and you're right but anyway.

Randy Ray: Dyke what's your bucket list?

Dyke Rogers: I don't know that mine has really changed much. My goal in life for the last 40 years is I didn't want to cut my own grass, wanted to always have two ply toilet paper, and I wanted to be able to retire by choice and I think that's still where I'm at.

Randy Ray: Can you top that Dr. Wendler?

President Wendler: No, probably not. Mine's fairly traditional. First of all, I enjoy thoroughly what I do every day. I thank God every day in the morning when I start today, I thank God that I have the opportunity to come over here and work, I'm so appreciative of it. And then I've got the mental faculties which every once in a while I scare myself and I think maybe they're not all there anymore, but what Mary and I think more and more about now is grandchildren. I think it's a natural process of aging. We have six and our oldest ones are twins and they'll be entering high school as a matter of fact, we were down to see them in Charlottesville last week and they were getting their learners permits. I told my son, hold on to your hair, it's going to fall out when there's two of them at the same time. But anyway, when I say I'm satisfied with what's laid before me every day and I am, and I don't pine for anything else. I don't want to go live on a golf course. I've done that already. I like Dyke's idea.

Randy Ray: [crosstalk 00:21:28] Think about how blessed we are to be happy to be where we are. A lot of people aren't that way and so-

President Wendler: And it's not perfect. I tell people all the time if you listen to me too long, you think I think I'm in heaven and it may not be, but it's pretty close in many ways and I'm thankful to be here and be doing what I do every day. I enjoy it.

Randy Ray:

We're thankful that you're here too and we're thankful that you guys are here today, too. This has been a fun episode. I've enjoyed our conversation today. And thank you for joining us for Reflection from WT. Please join us next time for episode number 38. We'll see you then.